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# Whose Performance Is It Anyway? Performed Criticism as Feminist Strategy

By the 1990s, the feminist contention that gender norms inform the production and reception of art had become widely accepted in academia. Many theatre journalists, however, continued to insist on the possibility of writing about performance from an apolitical, gender-neutral position. This article examines the gendered history of this insistence from the early 1700s to the present, its effects on the production and reception of plays by women, and its implications for theatre scholarship. Focusing on Carolee Schneemann's critique of a masculine bias in art criticism in her performance *Interior Scroll* and the Guerrilla Girls' actions against gender discrimination in the art world, this article examines strategies adopted by female and feminist journalists in Britain and the US to counter women's inequitable status in art journalism and playwriting. By engaging with the gendered binaries mind–body and text–performance, Schneemann and the Guerrilla Girls help clarify how reviewing practices have informed critical thinking about femininity and performance. In doing so, these artists anticipate poststructuralist feminist critiques of visibility and the performing body. Stefka Mihaylova holds a PhD in Theatre Studies from Northwestern University. Her research focuses on performance theory, especially gender and racial aspects of spectatorship in contemporary American and British feminist and radical theatre and performance art.

IN 1975, Carolee Schneemann performed *Interior Scroll* at the feminist festival 'Women Here and Now', held in a church in East Hampton, Long Island. Facing the audience, Schneemann outlined the contours of her naked body in paint, then climbed onto a table and, taking up poses like a model in a drawing class, read from her book *Cézanne, She Was a Great Painter*. Afterwards, she dropped the book and, standing with her legs apart, started unfolding a paper scroll from her vagina. The text on the scroll described the difficulties encountered by the female artist in a masculine-biased art world. 'Be prepared', Schneemann read, 'to have . . . your intentions distorted / the simplest relationship in your thoughts twisted . . . / if you are a woman . . . / they will almost never believe you really did it . . . / they will deny your sexuality or your work'.[1]

Schneemann performed the piece again in 1977 at the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado. Standing on a small proscenium stage, she outlined her body with mud. This time the scroll contained a dialogue in verse between two filmmakers, a woman and a man. In the dialogue, the male filmmaker asks the female filmmaker not to make men look at her films. Men cannot bear 'the personal clatter / the persistence of feelings / . . . the painterly mess / . . . the primitive technique' in a woman's work. In response, the female filmmaker comments: 'I saw my failings were worthy / of dismissal I'd be buried / alive my works lost . . . '.[2]

More than twenty years after Schneemann's performances, the Guerrilla Girls, a feminist activist group addressing women's discrimination in the arts, went into the washrooms of several New York theatres whose 1997–98 seasons did not include any plays by women. With the help of male supporters, they put up stickers that read: 'In this theatre the taking of photographs, the use of a recording device, and the production of plays by women is strictly prohibited.' In several interviews given about this action, the Guerrilla Girls concealed their identities under their infamous gorilla masks and the names of female artists from the past: Aphra

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Behn, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Gertrude Stein, and others.[3]

Another five years later, a study of the status of women in US theatre, commissioned by the Fund for Women Artists, established that only 17 per cent of the plays produced during the 2001–02 season were written by women. Trying to account for the discrepancy between this small number and the considerable critical acclaim that female theatre artists received in the late 1990s, the Fund and sociologists Susan Jonas and Suzanne Bennett, who conducted the study, assembled a panel of theatre professionals to analyze the findings. The strong bias of reviewers and producers in favour of work by men was identified as a major factor accounting for female playwrights' rare presence on the American stage, along with a lack of mentorship and poor knowledge of the tradition of female playwriting earlier than the twentieth century.[4]

## Text as Mind, Performance as Body

Schneemann's and the Guerrilla Girls' performances engage not only with this historically persistent bias, but also with the epistemological tradition on which it draws: the western modernist project of objective knowledge, transcending the contingencies of embodied existence. Staging their protest in the theatre washrooms, the Guerrilla Girls compelled their target spectators to perform the feminist contention that, in varying degrees, acts of knowledge are always informed by the ways in which social actors embody specific gender norms, and hence knowledge is situated, not objective.

*Interior Scroll*'s juxtaposition of the art critic's text and the artist's body deepened the critique by calling attention to another bias deriving from modernist epistemology: the perception that, as an embodied form, performance, compared to text, is a lesser medium of knowledge.[5] Additionally, according to art scholars Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, the association of text with the mind and of performance with the body has marked them, respectively, as a masculine and a feminine medium.[6]

In arguing for the value of art by women and contesting the criteria for assigning artistic merit, Schneemann and the Guerrilla Girls join a long line of women who have commented on art and social issues as theatre and art journalists, or in other guises, at a time when both artistic and social criticism were domains preserved for men. This article examines Schneemann's and the Guerrilla Girls' contribution to the tradition of female criticism by situating their critical strategies in the history of theatre and art journalism in Britain and the US – a practice with important economic and epistemological implications.

While there is no direct relationship between reviewing and individual spectators' appreciation of a show, reviews influence theatre managers' decisions on a production's duration, the decisions of theatre funding organizations who use reviews as evidence of artistic excellence, and the work of performance historians who use them as evidence of reception.[7] A careful consideration of the history of reviewing also reveals it as one of the practices through which the liberal categories of masculinity and femininity have been performatively (re)produced. Implicitly, reviewing helped associate masculinity with intellectual impartiality and representativeness, and femininity with women's presumed inability to overcome the constraints of embodied living. Schneemann and the Guerrilla Girls' major intervention in this history, I propose, is their assertion of the fleshy, gendered body not as a deterrent to critical thinking but as its enabling condition and of performance as a critical discourse in its own right.

Though *Interior Scroll* and the washroom actions of the Guerrilla Girls address attitudes towards American female artists, the intellectual history underlying these attitudes begins in Britain. The work of such prominent critics as Richard Steele, Joseph Addison, and later William Hazlitt set the model for several generations of American and British reviewers dedicated to the task of speaking for the 'enlightened public' and elevating standards of taste.[8]

In Britain, the origins of theatre journalism, as distinct from the broader activity of



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dramatic and performance criticism, are typically followed back to the early 1700s, when Steele and Addison started publishing literary judgements in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.[9] David Roberts, however, suggests that the ideological origins of reviewing should be traced even further back to the '1660s post-linguistic politics whereby (official) language became linear, rational, and capable of conveying the perceptions of an educated individual mind'.[10]

## Gendered Politics of Reviewing

From the beginning, the politics of reviewing were distinctly gendered. A number of women authors wrote in various literary genres at the time when *The Spectator* was published, but Addison and Steele neglected both women's work and the specific interests of their female readers. Though female readers asked the two editors to recommend readings specifically for them, their requests were never acknowledged.[11] Around a century later, the influential critic William Hazlitt wrote: 'I am a great admirer of the female muses of the present day. . . . Mrs Hannah More is another celebrated modern poetess. . . . She has written a great deal which I have never read.'[12] Routinely ignoring women's willingness to participate in official critical dialogues, as writers or as readers, solidified the perception of the 'educated individual mind' as masculine.

Women were not entirely absent from the field of reviewing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, yet it is difficult to estimate their numbers. In both Britain and the United States female journalists often wrote anonymously, aware that their opinions could be dismissed if they used their real names.[13] Additionally, both women and men used male or female pseudonyms, depending on the specific audiences they were targeting and on the cultural conventions which regulated credibility. In the early 1700s, male and female editors contemporary with Addison and Steele often adopted feminine editorial personae as a rhetorical strategy to claim political impartiality. As women did not participate in party politics, political impartiality was regarded as a feminine attribute.[14]

According to Ros Ballaster, 'by appropriating the stereotypically female activities of "tattling" and "spectating" to a male sphere . . . Addison and Steele functionally revalue impartiality as male'. Building on Ballaster's argument, Marcie Frank suggests that the posture of impartiality enabled Addison and Steele to separate literary-critical discourse from social and political agendas.[15] Defining impartiality narrowly – as not aligning one's journalistic stance with party politics – allowed them to present the journalist as simultaneously impartial and individual.

## Inferiority of the Performed Text

In addition to impartiality, the journalist's stance entailed the ability to distinguish between the merits of the dramatic text and those of the performance. Many believed that the aesthetic value of theatre lay principally in the dramatic text and that performance not only failed to convey this value, but could also impair the critic's independence of judgement.

Consider Hazlitt in this respect. In his essay 'On Criticism' in *Table Talk* (1821–22), Hazlitt wrote that the critic's task was to elucidate the essence of the dramatic text, in order to help the *reader* of drama appreciate the complexity of human life that the text represented. He worried that the theatrical performance simplified the text's complexity making the spectator passive and dependent on concrete choices, such as casting and setting. By contrast, the reader's active imagination was independent of time and setting.[16]

Likewise, a reviewer, who signed correspondence 'Corinna' and whom historians believe to have been writer Eliza Haywood, warned that the actors' talent could embellish a play so much that no judgements could be made about its qualities before it had gained a reputation with readers.[17] To critic Elizabeth Inchbald, too, the reader of drama had an analytical advantage that the spectator lacked.[18]

American reviewers at that time had similarly low regard for performance; this the



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theatre scholar Tice Miller attributes to Puritanism's influence on US culture. Even if talented actors managed fully to express the dramatist's sentiment, the nineteenth-century journalist Stephen Fiske wrote, the ephemerality of performance rendered it an unsuitable basis for aesthetic evaluation. Besides, Fiske felt that the 'imitative' and 'repetitious' nature of acting was profoundly incompatible with American individualism and independence of spirit.[19]

In Britain, the hierarchy between text and performance often distinctly intersected with gender politics. Greg Kucich hypothesizes that male reviewers' prejudice against performance may have been closely connected with the emergence of female actresses in the late seventeenth century. The perception of the actress as immoral, he proposes, was transferred to female playwrights as well, perhaps because many female playwrights were also actresses.[20] Indeed, Eliza Haywood, novelist, playwright, and editor of the *Female Spectator*, had been an actress before she turned to writing and publishing.

Elizabeth Inchbald, Britain's best-known female theatre critic of the eighteenth century, was both a playwright and an actress. Her journal entries reveal that she regularly observed spectators' reactions from the wings and used this feedback in her own playwriting. Her reviews, too, evaluated not only the literary merit of plays, but also their effectiveness in performance. She was always mindful of how actors' talent contributed to the success of a play.[21] Kucich's research, however, suggests that many male critics did not view female playwrights' acting experience as an advantage but, instead, were especially anxious about the moral effects of their scripts in print, as well as onstage.[22]

The occasional examples of a positive attitude towards female playwrights or the even rarer rise of a female critic to prominence confirm rather than contradict the tendency set by *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. For instance, throughout the Romantic period, some male critics were in fact eager to acknowledge women's literary and dramatic talent. Following the Licensing Act of 1737, which limited overt political content in drama, those critics could be reassured that no explicitly political, hence 'unfeminine' and 'perverse', texts by women would escape the censor's rigorous control and be printed or staged. Even in the cases of 'safe' female playwriting, however, male reviewers moderated their praise with stern critiques of perceived stylistic and structural weaknesses, frequently attributed to the playwrights' gender.[23]

## Experiences of the Female Critics

Another reason for the Romantic critics' interest in female authors may have been the patronage and mentorship that influential actor-managers, most notably David Garrick, extended to a number of female playwrights at the time, including Hannah Cowley, Hannah More, and others.[24] But the influence of such male figures could also severely limit women's expression of critical opinions. In 1756, Frances Brooke, playwright and editor of the provocatively titled weekly *Old Maid, by Mary Singleton, Spinster*, jeopardized her entire playwriting career upon publishing a review of Garrick's performance as King Lear which was not to his liking. None of the major London playhouses would produce her work until after Garrick's death in 1779.[25]

Moreover, the perception that there was something essentially wrong with allowing women to offer aesthetic evaluation publicly prevailed beyond personal confrontation and writing ability. In 1805, Inchbald's critical expertise was publicly recognized when the publisher Thomas Norton Longman asked her to write the critical prefaces to a collection of 125 plays popular on the stages at the time. But Longman's invitation was unusual. Even some of Inchbald's male admirers looked on the project with disapproval, finding that it was 'unfeminine' for a lady 'to place herself in the seat of judgement'.[26]

Limited by social convention and precarious male benevolence, writing women tried various tactics to make their voices matter. Thus, in the Romantic period, female journalists and playwrights sometimes used their own names or female pseudonyms, trying to



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benefit from the period's preoccupation with morality and politeness, both of which were codified as feminine traits. In *Old Maid*, Frances Brooke proposed a moral reform of the stage by 'a little court of female criticism' that would oppose 'all stage offences against sense and decency'.[27] Inchbald wrote that good drama was morally refined and advised dramatists to avoid 'bawdry' as well as 'anything "low" – vulgar characters or slapstick humour'.[28]

Female American theatre reviewers and and playwrights in the eighteenth century also described their texts as 'lessons of morality'.[29] However, in contexts where a masculine persona was more suited to facilitate intervention in the public sphere, women would assume rhetorical masculinity. Thus British and American female journalists used the rhetoric of civic humanism and patriotism, marked as masculine, to claim independence of judgement on non-domestic issues. Yet in doing so they contributed to the impression that patriotism and humanism, too, were ideals beyond party politics.[30]

The trouble with such rhetorical devices, then, is that their performative power easily overrules their users' intentions. Female journalists' conservative print personas have sometimes been mistaken for their actual political views.[31] Moreover, the strategies that male and female journalists devised to present their critical positions as apolitical (equated with representative) affirmed the illusion that apolitical criticism was possible and worthy of emulation.

## Twentieth-Century Critical Tendencies

During the Victorian period, the perception that the practice of journalism impaired women's morality was widely shared. Yet by the 1880s and 1890s the number of periodicals intended for female readers was increasing; and many mainstream periodicals also introduced 'ladies' columns', creating a new niche for female journalists in Britain. At that time, more women started reviewing art exhibitions, but female theatre journalists remained very few.[32] While art exhibitions opened during the day, nineteenth-century theatrical performance started in the evening and ended late at night. Theatre reviewers composed their texts immediately after that, 'when proper women were sleeping'.[33]

According to Gay Gibson Cima, the few women who could perhaps partially offset the risk to their reputations were journalists who wrote for the socialist press and socialites. Unlike the mainstream press, which was increasingly dominated by profit concerns, the radical press was seen to be driven by moral causes. Besides, Cima writes, socialist women 'were *expected* to judge mainstream cultural performances, and women socialites were *expected* to be able to comment intelligently on the arts'.[34]

Less is known about the practices of late nineteenth-century American female theatre reviewers, but the few published findings about them indicate that their access to the mainstream press was similarly influenced by social prejudice. For instance, Cima suggests that more women reviewed theatre in the US than in Britain because social and arts reporting, including theatre reporting, were typically assigned to 'unpractised' journalists.[35] Tice Miller's study of a group of New York critics of that period discusses only one woman in some detail: Ada Clare, whose feminist ideas and unwillingness to comply with gender conventions scandalized society.[36] As with socialist female reviewers in Britain, Clare's presence in the New York group was enabled by the socialist ideals of its founding member Henry Clapp, who urged revolt against bourgeois norms and advocated free expression of all passions.[37]

There has been no full study about female theatre or art reviewers in the first half of the twentieth century, but the little information I have found suggests that, as in earlier periods, they were vastly outnumbered by male reviewers. The art historian Meaghan Clarke notes that, as art writing became more established and professionalized at the turn of the twentieth century, female art reviewers became less prominent.[38] And in his study of British theatre after the Second World War, Dominic Shellard describes Penelope Gilliatt's theatre and film reviews for the *Observer* in the 1960s as a notable



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breakthrough in a male-dominated profession.[39] In an article outlining the tendencies in theatre journalism in New York during the twentieth century, Rachel Shteir mentions no female reviewers in the period before the Second World War and only four in the 1950s and 1960s: Mary McCarthy, Susan Sontag, Elizabeth Hardwick, and Erika Munk. Shteir specifies that their presence was a rare exception to the gender politics of the profession.[40]

## Challenging the Myth of Objectivity

Even at the turn of the twenty-first century the central assumption which has defined reviewing throughout its male-dominated history – the possibility of an apolitical and, therefore, representative and objective stance – continued to underlie the practices of many theatre journalists, and not only those writing for mainstream periodicals. In a 2002 essay, Jonathan Kalb, who has published reviews and criticism in both mainstream and academic journals, including the *Village Voice*, the *New York Times*, *Theater*, and *Theatre Journal*, asserted, with deliberate provocation, that 'criticism is a talent . . . either one is a critic or one isn't'. He defined theatre journalism as 'bringing unfamiliar ideas to a general audience, connecting a demanding art to a reluctant public' by providing 'objective and informed commentary'.[41]

In his 1992 book on theatre criticism, London-based Irving Wardle, who had written regularly for *The Times*, *Independent* and *Evening Standard*, similarly described the theatre journalist as a representative speaker, illuminating ideas for a general audience. 'When a reviewer does succeed in finding the right words for something that has been vaguely hovering in the public mind, he creates satisfaction all around.'[42]

Wardle warned that, to preserve his critical independence intact, the reviewer should abstain from attending rehearsals. The artists, he wrote, 'may say nothing to influence your opinion, but after a couple of weeks with these lovely people it is unthinkable to return to your solitary room and dismiss their efforts in a crisp 500 words.'[43] His warning conveys the humanist assumption that evaluating representation from a position external to it is not only possible but desirable. Paradoxically, it turns out that, to increase participation in theatre and critical aesthetic discourse, the theatre journalist has to maintain a position of critical solitude.

Women occasionally critiqued the gendered politics of reviewing prior to the twentieth century,[44] but since the 1980s the challenge has been systematic, as the growing numbers of female playwrights, women's theatre collectives, and the feminist scholarly project for revising masculine paradigms of knowledge foregrounded the necessity for specifically feminist theatre journalism. In the course of these critiques, the very premise of reviewing came under question. The rhetorical position of a speaker who is simultaneously independent and representative of a general public was not only historically inaccessible to women, but also contradicts feminist reviewing practices.

By their self-definition as feminist, these journalists stated that their reviewing was not apolitical. Additionally, many feminist reviewers have become closely associated with women's theatre groups, seeing the constructive criticism of female artists as their primary task. Hence, they have broken with Wardle's prescription of non-involvement, supposed to preserve critical independence, and have rejected 'objectivity' as a desirable critical position.

One major challenge that feminist journalists have faced derives from their responsibility to two audiences: the feminist theatre community and a larger group of spectators who may or may not share its politics. Feminist scholar Jill Dolan discussed this challenge in her 1988 study *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*:

> Precarious feminist theatre and performance groups need favourable documentation of their work to persuade funding organizations and audiences to continue their support. The feminist critic who writes frankly of a feminist production's problems risks a certain ostracism from the creative community. In the spirit of progress, however, it seems necessary to point out the limitations of even the most well-intentioned feminist work . . . and to institute a dialogue that resonates beyond the confines of an insular feminist community.[45]



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In her 1981 book *Carry on, Understudies*, the British feminist, scholar, and playwright Michelene Wandor, who also writes reviews for the press, expressed the same dilemma.[46] This dilemma continually reminds the feminist reviewer of her/his situated position and of the consequences that her/his critical acts entail, preempting any illusions of humanist objectivity.

**Relegating the Female Playwright**

While the emergence of feminist criticism did not eliminate the bias against female artists overnight, the presence of feminist critical voices in mainstream periodicals and in periodicals with smaller readerships has provided a counterpoint to critics less sensitive to gender issues, engaging reviewers, producers, and spectators in a dialogue about the intersections of artistic and gender politics.

In 1994, for instance, reviewers' responses to Sarah Daniels's *The Madness of Esme and Shaz*, which stages the encounter between the formerly estranged Christian conservative Esme and her disturbed lesbian niece Shaz, noticeably divided along gender lines, reviving the debate on the politics of theatre journalism in Britain. The play, which argues powerfully that women will not improve their social positions unless they consciously support each other, was dismissed by Nicholas de Jongh of the *Evening Standard* as 'pretty and witty but beside the point'.[47] The *Financial Times* critic Andrew St George was similarly unimpressed, describing the play as 'a good dish which stays too long on the table; it starts hot and goes cold'.[48] Benedict Nightingale of *The Times* and Neil Smith of *What's On* complained to readers that the play offered nothing to men.[49] Meanwhile, the run was extended in response to popular demand, and the play proved a box-office success.[50] Audiences' previous familiarity with Daniels's work, the number of subscribers to the Royal Court Theatre, and positive reviews of the play by female journalists may have contributed to this outcome.

The recurring pattern of a gender divide in the journalistic reception of Daniels's work,[51] as well as the coincidence of *Esme and Shaz*'s run with Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker* at the Cottesloe (the studio space of the National Theatre), compelled feminist theatre journalists to evaluate the situation of women's theatre after two decades of feminist activism and scholarship. In an article for the *Guardian*, Claire Armitstead argued that 'the creeping conservatism' of the 1990s continued to constrict female theatre artists.

The reception of women-written and women-produced work in the 1970s and 1980s had suggested that in the 1990s women's theatre would achieve success on the mainstream stages. But as the productions of Churchill's and Daniels's plays demonstrate, women's theatre in 1994 was still relegated to smaller studio theatre spaces.[52] Productions in marginalized venues could influence their reception unfavourably. Thomas Winship, editor of the *Boston Globe*, writes that few journalists give smaller-venue performances the word-length they deserve.[53]

Carole Woddis, possibly the most influential feminist theatre journalist covering the contemporary London stage, saw the response to Daniels's work as symptomatic of the conventional premise and practice of theatre journalism. To Woddis, the theatre review reflects 'a wildly shifting collection of influences – susceptibility to seeing a minority voice honoured . . . sensitivity to time and place, tiredness, personal worries, political and class affiliations, not to mention gender affiliations'.

More often than not, however, male and female journalists alike disregard the precarious conditions of reviewing and assume an omnipotent voice, writing to unspoken conventions 'settled long ago by the male rules of logic, reason, and objectivity'.[54] Similarly, in the *New Statesman and Society*, Betty Caplan reinforced lesbian theatre's need for supportive critical voices, capable of responding to it 'meaningfully and personally'.[55] To Caplan, these nurturing critics were certainly not the majority of theatre journalists, whom she described elsewhere as 'a pretty homogeneous bunch: white, male, Oxbridge, middle-class'.[56]

In the US, Jonas and Bennett established that female playwrights (especially those



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from racial minorities) are less produced than male playwrights, even when they write realist plays with Aristotelian plots, do not write from a feminist position, and do not want to be categorized as women playwrights. Discussions on the possible ways of redressing the disparity between male and female playwrights, following Jonas and Bennett's report, also emphasized the importance of journalists' advocacy of female playwrights.[57]

**Reconciling Humanism and Feminism?**

By the time Jonas and Bennett's findings were publicized in the US, feminist critiques of reviewing had gained enough visibility to be taken seriously even by critics who continued to uphold a humanist stance. In fact, some of the most established and influential practitioners of humanist reviewing insist on the progressive value of humanism, even as they acknowledge mainstream journalism's complicity with the gender disparity in playwriting and despite being familiar with poststructuralist epistemic arguments.

This is why their position needs to be considered carefully. Of those, Kalb's defence of humanism is particularly intriguing. Drawing both on his reviewing practice and his experience on the faculty of the NYU Performance Studies Department, he situates his humanist position in a broader debate of how to study and write about theatre.

Kalb asserts that the humanist critic's elitist stance is expressive not of arrogance, but of conscious resistance to the denigration of art and to the political passivity encouraged by the mass media. 'In the age of TV and video,' he writes, 'theatre is a proudly elitist medium.' Its elitism regresses to arrogance only when uninformed critics write about drama from an all-knowing position; but such cases, he admits, are unfortunately numerous.[58]

Kalb's second argument addresses the effect of poststructuralist theories on theatre scholarship, which, he claims, have provoked scholars over-hastily to dismantle the canon without accounting for its appeal. He is especially critical of the poststructuralist ban on generalization. In his view, this ban results in rhetorically weak writing, lacking in passion. Feminists, too, must generalize from their position as feminists if they want to write persuasive reviews.[59] In a speech addressed to students of dramatic criticism, Kalb advises the future reviewers:

> Be female, at least sometimes. . . . Obviously, this will come easier to those of you who happen to be women, but not being female is no excuse for never thinking about it. . . . More women need to get involved in the field, and more men need to tap their repressed female sympathies. . . . I suspect our male critics . . . have not always totally understood the work of innovative female artists.[60]

Kalb's appeal to 'be female' bears a striking resemblance to a founding moment in the humanist tradition of journalism – Addison and Steele's re-gendering of impartiality as male. Despite the ironic effect of this resemblance, Kalb's attempt to draw a parallel between elitism and feminist criticism, presenting both as critical stances against political passivity, appears motivated by genuine desire to support women's work. Yet his failure to see the link between the appeal of the canon, mainstream critics' elitism, and their misunderstanding of 'innovative female artists' allows him to present the appreciation of women's plays as simply a matter of good will.

Neither does he comment on the canon's ability to co-opt plays by women, by maintaining an illusion of universality. According to feminist critics, it is this illusion that underlies mainstream journalism's tendency to downplay feminist themes in acclaimed plays by women, such as the Pulitzer Prize-winning *'Night, Mother* (1983) and *Wit* (1999), and to present these plays as addressing universal human issues despite their focus on female characters and relationships between women.[61] Additionally, Kalb's appeal to feminist writers to generalize from a feminist position contradicts the plurality of positions within feminism and materialist feminists' emphasis on historicity.

Yet, though humanism and critical positions emphasizing social difference, such as feminisms, are generally at cross-purposes,



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humanism's promise of all-inclusiveness may appear particularly attractive when juxtaposed with insufficiently nuanced perceptions of how artistic politics should account for social difference. Such was the case with the famous confrontation between reviewer and artistic director Robert Brustein and playwright August Wilson over funding policies for arts organizations. Similarly to Kalb, Brustein, who has written highly of Churchill's, Suzan-Lori Parks's, and Susan Sontag's plays, views the humanist stance as an alternative to discriminatory practices. At the same time, he rejects any hint that mainstream critics cannot adequately evaluate gender- and race-specific work.

### The Debate over Funding Policies

Such claims, he argues, 'carve off and separate specific sexes, races, and what have you from the human race'.[62] Elsewhere, he implies that theatre scholars' 'fashionable theories and political ideologies' have a share in this unnecessary discrimination.[63] To be fair, Brustein does not deny the existence of social inequality; rather he protests against funding for the arts which emphasizes social concerns *at the expense of* artistic quality.[64] The logic underlying this stance becomes clearer in the context of Wilson's equally polemical address to the 1996 National Conference of the Theatre Communications Group.

In his address, Wilson critiqued funding organizations' support for colour-blind casting and productions of black plays in mainstream venues. To Wilson, these practices were assimilationist and imperialist, solidifying the western canon's aesthetic authority. Instead, he demanded financial and artistic support for powerful African American theatres, which would perpetuate the cultural politics of the Black Arts Movement.[65] Centuries of violence against African Americans, Wilson argued, had forced African Americans to develop their own unique culture; hence they deserved their own theatres.[66]

In the same speech, Wilson singled out Brustein as a cultural imperialist, citing his critique of arts funding privileging sociological over aesthetic criteria.[67] Responding to Wilson in the press and in a face-to-face town-hall meeting in New York, Brustein pinpointed the weaknesses in Wilson's argument. Wilson's own adherence to Aristotelian conventions and mainstream venues contradicted his claims for separate African American theatres and essential African American cultural uniqueness.[68]

Rather than enforce cultural assimilation, Brustein continued, presenting the work of African American artists, such as Suzan-Lori Parks, in mainstream venues gave these artists a chance to address the entire human race from their own culturally situated perspectives. Finally, he disagreed with Wilson's concept of a unified black experience and spoke of the religious and ethnic differences within blackness.[69] African American scholar Henry Louis Gates similarly rejected Wilson's concept of African American artistic and cultural purity, citing the inconvenient fact that the Black Arts Movement was funded by powerful organizations such as the Ford Foundation.[70]

Brustein's critique of a rigid black–white cultural dualism is certainly appropriate. However, his insistence that art should not be supported on the basis of 'sociological criteria' neglects the gendered and racial politics of networking in theatre, emphasized by such critics as Jonas and Bennett.[71] Also, like Kalb, Brustein downplays the extent to which 'sociology' – i.e. the historical privileging of certain groups of playwrights over others based on gendered and raced identity – informs criteria for evaluating aesthetics. Ironically, his reference to Suzan-Lori Parks exemplifies the importance of politically motivated collaboration. The aesthetic qualities of Parks's plays, however these qualities may be defined, have been the joint accomplishment of her own effort and the support she received from agencies which have invested in developing new theatre talent, such as the feminist organization Women's Projects and Productions, Inc., which co-commissioned her play *Venus*.

On a larger plane, the engagement of humanist critics such as Kalb and Brustein with feminist arguments demonstrates feminists' success in establishing an alternative



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approach to humanist reviewing. In the course of Kalb's and Brustein's critiques of feminist and critical-race artistic and critical practices, humanism is revealed as yet another situated stance, and the gendered and raced bodies behind the humanist reviewers' texts come into focus.

### The Text–Performance Binary

Less attention has been given to reviewing's historical complicity with reinforcing the hierarchy between text and performance, even though the prejudice against performance, as unable to stimulate analytical reflection or even as deterring it, survived well into the twentieth century. According to Shannon Jackson, this prejudice underlies theatre's awkward position in twentieth-century critical thought. In late modernism, when the formalist autonomy of the work was the norm, theatre did not qualify as high art because the meanings of the theatrical performance were deemed too dependent on its larger context of production and reception. But when the linguistic turn made open-ended signification the rule, theatre's reliance on live bodies was seen as too constraining. In the academy, the text–performance binary influenced notions of how theatre should be studied, producing a split between drama, as a sub-field of literature, and theatre, as a fine arts subject.[72]

Likewise, the limits of reviewing as a textual response to a performance medium have only rarely been addressed. Irving Wardle, for instance, acknowledges that most present-day theatre journalists do not understand the complexity of the actor's work. 'I can think of no front-rank English critic,' he writes, 'who has made his living as an actor. By contrast, there are several who have written successful plays; and the shared condition . . . gives them a basic foothold in the playwright's world. They have no such foothold in the world of an actor.'

To him this is not really a disadvantage, because, he says, even though reviewers cannot analyze what actors do, they can describe what they do.[73] Clearly, Wardle overlooks the possibility that a reviewer who has had some acting experience may describe actors' work and evaluate their creative contribution differently from one who has not. Surprising as his statement may appear to a theatre practitioner or scholar, it is a manifestation of theatre journalism's original allegiance to literary criticism and the historically prevalent perception of actors' work as derivative of the playwright's vision.

The limiting effects of associating critical thinking solely with textual expression have been vividly exposed in Gay Gibson Cima's book *Early American Women Critics* (2006). This ground-breaking study demonstrates that textual criticism, including journalism, was only one mode of critical commentary in seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and early nineteenth-century America, and argues for the historical importance of embodied mediums such as lectures, sermons, and unofficial public speaking in city streets and market places.

Accepting such embodied forms on a par with printed commentary acknowledges the intellectual contributions of women whose class and/or racial status made textual expression an unlikely choice. Additionally, Cima's research elucidates specifically bodily strategies that women used to claim respectability and justify their participation in public discussions. Borrowing the gestural and oral, as well as rhetorical, patterns associated with patriotism, religious revelation, or other discourses dominant in particular historical moments, these women, Cima writes, at least partially transcended the confines of femininity and aspired to the abstract body of liberal subjecthood reserved for white, propertied men.[74]

### The Changing Theoretical Stance

In Schneemann's and the Guerrilla Girls' contestations of a masculine bias in reviewing and production, the need to occupy an abstract (masculine) body in order to gain access to critical discourse becomes radically questioned. *Interior Scroll* is particularly significant in the history I have outlined, because its changing reception reveals feminist scholars' growing awareness of the gendered aspects of the text–performance binary.



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In the spirit of radical feminism, Schneemann sought a 'vulvic space' in *Interior Scroll*: a representational approach countering the 'traditionally "phallic" symbolism' of western art. To develop this approach, she thought of the vagina as 'a sculptural form [and] architectural referent', but also as 'the source of sacred knowledge, ecstasy . . . transformation'.[75] Like Judy Chicago's vulvic imagery in *The Dinner Party* (1979),[76] the centrality of the vagina in *Interior Scroll* proved so controversial that Schneemann's materialist critique of the impact of gender on art practices was largely neglected.

Amelia Jones explains that in the 1960s and 1970s, under the influence of formalism, works such as *Interior Scroll* and *The Dinner Party* were dismissed because they gestured beyond 'art proper' to the realms of the social and the political. The leading art critic Clement Greenberg defined modernist art as art that is abstract, not figural (representational).[77] Conversely, feminist artists, seeking to create an iconography of the female experience (a cultural feminist notion), returned to figural representation. As the linguistic turn gained authority in the 1980s, poststructuralist feminists critiqued the concept of shared female experience, deriving from women's shared biology, as essentialist. Feminist visual and performance art of the 1970s, including *The Dinner Party* and *Interior Scroll*, was rejected as expressive of that concept. The materialist critique of art production and reception in Schneemann's and Chicago's works was overlooked once again.[78]

In the 1990s, as feminist scholars rethought the gender and sexual implications of the linguistic turn, the feminist art of the 1970s was re-evaluated. According to Sue-Ellen Case, the linguistic turn supported feminist scholars' attempts to dissolve the connection between the female body and essentialism by replacing the fleshy body with a textualized body: the body as a sign. This, Case contends, became almost indistinguishable from the mind. Hence, the linguistic turn repeated the Cartesian prioritizing of the intellect.[79]

Behind the 'textualization' of the flesh, Case (*pace* Sagri Dhairyam) reads the perennial masculine unease with the female body: 'the monstrously feminized body's sensual evocations of smell, fluid, and hidden vaginal spaces'.[80] What was once regarded as a fraught relationship between the materialist critique of art practices and the centrality of female sexual imagery in Schneemann's and Chicago's works was then reconsidered as productive tension, disclosing 'the ideological assumptions that motivate critical thought'.[81]

### Feminist Critique and Female Body

In *Interior Scroll*, the female critic re-entered the public sphere bodily, much like the early American critics in Cima's study who offered critiques at the marketplace, in the streets, in literary salons, and on stage. Yet those critics, just like the female journalists at that time, had to invent complex tactics to offset the cultural disadvantages of their female bodies. Schneemann, by contrast, asserted her right to critique not *despite* but *because of* her female body and, in the course of her performances, theorized a female body that could be simultaneously fleshy and non-essentialist.

The explicit connection between feminist critique and the female body in *Interior Scroll* makes Schneemann's critical position appear essentialist. This impression is reinforced by Schneemann's evocation of the myth of the goddess. Cultural feminists used this myth to claim that women were inherently creative. 'Even if you are older than me,' the female artist tells the male critic in *Interior Scroll 2*, 'you are a monster I spawned / you have slithered out of the excesses and vitality of the sixties . . . '.[82] However, the citation of the goddess myth is juxtaposed with a critique of mainstream art practice and criticism which dismisses women's art and excludes it from art histories:

> (I don't take the advice / of men who only talk to / themselves) / PAY ATTENTION TO CRITICAL / AND PRACTICAL FILM LANGUAGE / IT EXISTS FOR AND IN ONLY / ONE GENDER.

This juxtaposition, Rebecca Schneider argues, renders Schneemann's feminist position



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materialist, not cultural-feminist. Unlike the Mother Goddess, Schneemann's body spawns critique, not sacred life.[83]

I find Schneemann's position even more complex. Notions of 'naturalness', 'immediacy', and 'maleness'[84] appear unqualified in her essays, and she does claim that woman's creativity is 'inherent'.[85] Therefore, if we read *Interior Scroll* in the context of Schneemann's essays, the female body she authors in her *text* veers toward essentialism. Yet the relationship between body and word in her *performance* engages dialectically with the materialist and the radical feminist approaches to the body, while allowing primacy to neither.

The relationship between Schneemann's body in *Interior Scroll 2* and the scroll unfolding from her vagina may be read in a cultural-feminist fashion as dramatizing the erasure of the 'real' female body by a fictional but normative masculine text; but this is not the only possible reading. By outlining her body with paint in *Interior Scroll 1* and with mud in *Interior Scroll 2*, while assuming the poses of an artist's model, Schneemann illustrates how the female body has been constructed through male appropriation, via the artistic convention of the nude.

According to Schneider, in Schneemann's earlier work *Eye/Body* (1963), the artist reclaims the nude by becoming both the author and the object of her own artistic representation.[86] In *Interior Scroll*, Schneemann performs the same gesture of authorship. The feminist politics of this re-appropriation become clear through a comparison with the *Anthropometries* of French artist Yves Klein. Created between 1960 and 1962, these paintings are almost contemporary with *Eye/Body*. Klein's and Schneemann's works are also loosely connected through their involvement in neo-avant-garde performance art.[87]

### Body as Essence and as Representation

Klein's *Anthropometries* comprise a series of images representing headless female bodies, typically blue. In the spirit of the neo-avant-garde movements of the 1950s and 1960s, preoccupied with ideas of spontaneity and immediacy, the creation of the *Anthropometries* was frequently staged in front of an audience, sometimes accompanied by live music. Klein covered his models in paint from the breasts to above the knees, and the models would then imprint their bodies on a canvas by wrapping themselves in it or by lying on it. With these imprints, Klein tried to accomplish representation as a real presence in contrast to conventional paintings of human figures which, in his view, generally denoted the absence of the model.[88]

Even though the model's participation was central to these performances, Klein saw himself as the sole author of the imprints. 'My brushes were alive and remote-controlled,' he said of the women's bodies.[89] By claiming that the immediacy of the imprints would 'impregnate' the viewers with sensibility, just as he 'impregnated' the surface of the canvas,[90] Klein claimed authorship from a specifically masculine position. The 'real presence' that he pursued was not that of the female body, as he claimed, but that of his 'impregnating' act.

Schneemann does not perform an unmediated, 'truthful' body. Rather, when she strips and outlines her own naked body with paint or mud and then locates it between this self-imposed frame and her texts about male criticism, she creates a tension between the body as an essence and the body as representation. This tension becomes a central theme of *Interior Scroll*. To accomplish his intention of 'real presence', Klein must persuade viewers to ignore the performing woman's contribution and perceive her only as Klein's tool. Conversely, Schneemann situates the performing female body as an active mediator of meaning.

From the perspective of Case's critique of the poststructuralist primacy of the text, Schneemann's treatment of the text in *Interior Scroll 2* is especially interesting. On the one hand, the dialogue that Schneemann reads is a text, but even as a text the male perspective is not dominant because it is countered by the female artist's response. Yet the text is also an object, a coil. By turning the text into a concrete object, Schneemann denies its glorified status as an act of



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universal knowledge. The male critique is no longer a record of truth but a theatrical prop, a tool for creating illusion. In a broader sense, by objectifying the text she interrupts the association between the text and the abstract (masculine) mind.

The changing scholarly evaluations of *Interior Scroll* are indicative of the extent to which the meanings of a performance depend on the knowledge and attitudes that spectators bring to it. Any assessment of Schneemann's strategies must, therefore, account for the composition of her audiences and the larger performance contexts. Schneeman's naked body signified differently in *Interior Scroll 1*, where she presented to a largely female audience at a feminist festival, than in *Interior Scroll 2*, performed for the mixed-gender audience of an experimental film festival. In the second case, Schneemann potentially ran a higher danger of coming across spectators who would dismiss her performance as feminist preaching, or perhaps even reduce it to a titillating spectacle.

This dual potential for critique and objectification renders Schneemann's performance illustrative of the feminist debates on the advantages and traps of visibility. Second-wave feminism, the context of the artist's work of the 1970s, set a high value on visibility as a strategy for claiming increased participation for women in the public sphere. However, in the three decades since *Interior Scroll*, feminists have become increasingly aware that women's visibility, though often empowering, is not universally effective.

The performance scholar Peggy Phelan has argued that white, propertied men maintain their status not simply through their easier access to visual representation, but also through their capacity to refuse visibility. According to Phelan, by controlling the conditions of visibility, white men retain the exclusive privilege of an abstract body, unconstrained by racial and gender marks,[91] as exemplified by the textual body of the humanist theatre journalist. Schneemann rejected this textual body and took the risk of replacing it with a fleshy critical body. Alternatively, the Guerrilla Girls chose to theorize an abstract feminine body and specifically feminist invisibility, which they practised through text and performance alike.

**From Confrontation to Consumerism**

In 1985, ten years after Schneemann performed *Interior Scroll 1*, the Guerrilla Girls, a group of female artists and women working in art galleries and museums, studied the ratio of male to female artists represented at major art galleries and the number of women included in art history textbooks. Their findings indirectly confirmed Schneemann's argument of a masculine bias against women's work. In contrast to the liberal 1970s, in the 1980s more people celebrated rampant consumerism as part of a conservative political backlash; and in these conditions female artists remained severely under-represented.[92] The Guerrilla Girls realized that the period's intolerance of radical intervention, as well as the stereotype of the preachy 'feminazi' imposed at that time, rendered ineffective the confrontational rhetoric of the 1970s. Hence, they decided to reinvent 'the "f" word' (feminism) and fight discrimination 'with facts, humour, and fake fur'.[93] Mimicry and building networks among women in the art world became their major tactics.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Guerrilla Girls organized a series of actions mimicking the conventions of advertising. In 1985, having studied the art criticism sections of major American periodicals, they sent postcards to their editors and art critics. The postcards stated 'These critics don't write enough about women artists', and listed the names of the culpable critics together with the percentage of articles in which they had discussed women's art between 1979 and 1985, relative to the entire number of reviews they had written within the same period.[94]

In 1989 a poster stating that 'Bus companies are more enlightened than NYC galleries' appeared on buses and billboards. These informed viewers that 49.2 per cent of bus drivers were women, while only 16 per cent of the works exhibited in a total of 33 New York galleries were by female artists. That same year, major art collectors whose collections did not include any works by white or



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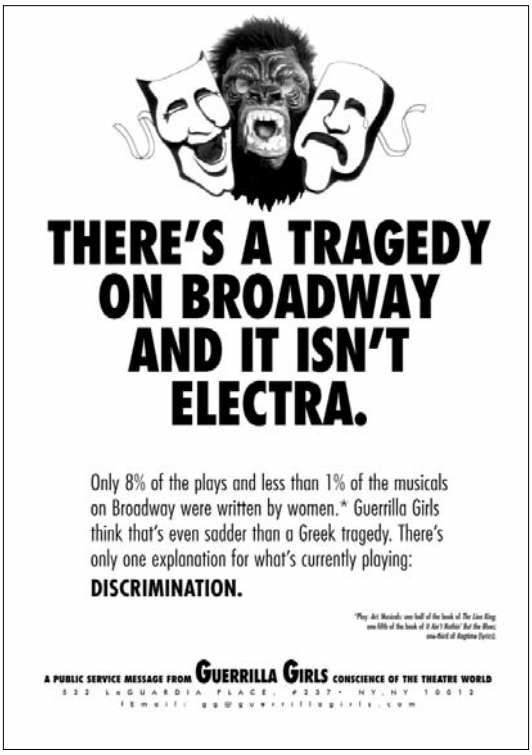

non-white women or by male artists of colour received postcards which asked: 'When racism and sexism are no longer fashionable, what will your art collection be worth?'[95] In 1999, following their theatre washrooms action, the Guerrilla Girls sent out posters to artistic directors nationwide who were not producing plays by women. According to the posters, 'There [was] a tragedy on Broadway and it [was] not *Electra*.'[96] Frequently, the Guerrilla Girls received the statistical data quoted in their materials from female secretaries and managers in art galleries and theatres. Some of these women joined the group.[97]

### Importance of Collective Identity

Inadvertently following in the steps of their pre-twentieth-century predecessors, the Guerrilla Girls presented their commentaries in the guise of a dominant discourse. Masked as humorous soundbites and promotional materials, their critical messages exposed the gendered politics of art institutions and, at the same time, reformulated the commercial genre of advertising from an encouragement of consumption into a critical tactic. Like the performing critics in Cima's book, the artists addressed the public in the quotidian spaces of the street, the bus, or the office, making their messages accessible to targeted recipients, as well as to people who do not regularly visit museums and theatres. In all these exchanges, the artists remained anonymous. Yet their anonymity was also clearly situated in feminist politics rather than aspiring to universal representativeness.

Crucially, the Guerrilla Girls managed to maintain a simultaneously invisible and situated stance not only when they were physically absent from the scene of commentary, as in the examples above, but also when they physically embodied their critiques. The life-size rubber gorilla masks and black clothes, which the Guerrilla Girls use in their public appearances, serve as protective disguises,[98] but this is just one of the costume's functions. On certain occasions, the Girls have appeared in fishnet stockings and stiletto heels. In this latter case, the juxtaposition between the masks and fishnets lays bare stereotypes of femininity in a Brechtian fashion. Additionally, by wearing the masks and by using names of female artists from the past, the Guerrilla Girls try to challenge the celebrity cult and to emphasize the possibility for collective identity.[99] These two functions of their costumes allow the Guerrilla Girls to create a feminist alternative to the humanist critic's abstract (masculine) body.

In contrast to the humanist quest for a critical perspective beyond social differences, which has frequently led humanist critics to neglect the intersections between gender and






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racial politics and knowledge, the Guerrilla Girls' collectively inhabited body acknowledges such differences through playful citation, inviting discussion of their effects. The fishnets and stiletto shoes cite stereotypes of femininity and the gorilla masks cite the racist perception of non-white people as less than human. Yet a person of any gender, sexuality, or race, could be hiding under the mask.

Thus, while the artists' bodies emphatically perform femininity, they offer no 'proof' that this performance coincides with 'true nature'. Hence, their live actions present femininity as simultaneously embodied and constructed, proposing that, while femininity cannot be donned and discarded at will, it is neither reducible to the female flesh, nor are its effects solely constraining. Alternatively, some of the Guerrilla Girls' posters show nude female bodies below the gorilla masks, repeating Schneemann's suspension of the body between flesh and artistic convention.

Cima writes that, by borrowing the legitimizing rhetoric and gestures of normative discourses such as humanism and patriotism, eighteenth-century female critics created 'host bodies': critically enabling 'zones in between embodiment and abstraction' which 'can be collectively occupied'.[100] Likewise, the body that the Guerrilla Girls create is citational and collectively occupied, yet it does not cite normative personhood. The conventions of passive ultra-femininity and racial inferiority that this body performs are sexist and racist, and are exposed as such. It is a postmodern body, which continually draws attention to the political significance of the gestures and rhetoric that it cites.

Additionally, the Guerrilla Girls offer their own bodies as hosts. As they adopt the names of female artists whose work has been neglected in art canons and tell people about their works, the Guerrilla Girls' bodies become transformed into an alternative archive. Thus they become bodies of knowledge, claiming acknowledgement both for their predecessors' and for their own artistic achievements.

In their theatre-washrooms action, the artists once again stepped out of the spotlight and intriguingly offered spectators the opportunity to embody the critical perspective that the Girls theorized. It was a risky decision, as spectators could simply miss the stickers (and their parodic inversion of audience codes of conduct) stuck to the stalls.

### Critical Potential of the Intermission

Yet, the choices of time and setting helped expose the viewing conventions that encourage spectators to assume a humanist stance. In the darkened auditorium during a conventional realist performance, the spectator's invisible and immobile body momentarily becomes an abstract body, seemingly free from the marks of gender and race. By contrast, viewers confronted the stickers in the culturally inscribed space of the washrooms; spectators were addressed individually, rather than as a disembodied group.

The emphasis on the spectator's gender and his or her literally leaking, physical body simultaneously presented the spectator's body as both fleshy and constructed and invited reflection on how its social status – white or non-white, male or female, disabled or healthy – signifies in acts of viewing and knowledge. In other words, spectators were invited to assume a situated stance.

The time slots in which theatregoers would have visited the washrooms and seen





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the stickers – immediately before and after shows, and especially during intermissions – also contributed to the critical effects of the action. Theatre theorist and director Anne Ubersfeld explains that intermissions 'oblige the spectator to come back to a twofold reality': the reality of the spectator's life beyond the theatre, and the social, historical, and cultural events and phenomena referenced by the performance.[101]

In the intermissions, the fictional story that has been evolving on the stage can be critically compared with this twofold reality.[102] Not incidentally, Strindberg, who overtly associated theatrical naturalism with establishing control over spectators' perceptions, suggested abolishing intermissions.[103] The washrooms action used the critical potential of the intermission, encouraging spectators to consider how gender politics inform both the performance they have been watching, and the references on which they base their evaluation of the artists' work.

## Consequences and Continuing Problems

In retrospect, feminists' efforts for more inclusive art institutions have produced mixed results. Galleries the Guerrilla Girls critiqued have started including women in their exhibitions more frequently. Following their attacks on art critics, prominent New York critics wrote columns on female artists. Some of them credited the Guerrilla Girls.[104] Most importantly, the original Guerrilla Girls have inspired women across the United States and even abroad to found their own Guerrilla Girls groups and to fight against discrimination locally.[105]

After the theatre-washrooms action, the Roundabout Theatre in New York, which was one of their targets, produced a play by a woman in their 1998–99 season, though not in every subsequent season.[106] Jonas and Bennett's report, too, drew much attention when it was first published, and major theatres produced more plays by women the following season. Yet by 2007 the number of plays written and directed by women had dwindled to 17 and 16 per cent, respectively. Unsympathetic reviewing which presents women's works as more limited in scope than men's was again identified as a major obstacle to female playwrights' careers.[107]

However, the impact of feminist journalists and performance critics' works exceeds these modest immediate outcomes. Their insistence on acknowledging the reviewer's political and theoretical stance has established an important alternative to the traditional perception of the art journalist as an impartial arbiter of taste. While this traditional perception is still powerful, the reviewer is now also seen as a specifically situated 'convener for conversation'.[108]

In turn, seeing the reviewer as a facilitator of dialogue rather than as a privileged interpreter of value emphasizes the collaboration of artists, critics, and spectators in the theatrical encounter and calls attention to their distinct contributions to meaning-making. Schneemann and the Guerrilla Girls have helped deepen the understanding of this collaboration by exposing the relationship between artists' and traditional reviewers' differing proficiencies in the mediums of text and performance and their differing understanding of aesthetic merit.

The theoretical implications of Schneemanns' and the Guerrilla Girls' performances are equally significant. Accepting the challenge of making the live female body central to a critical exchange, they disproved, in practice, the hasty conflations between flesh and essence prevalent in much poststructuralist theory. Instead, they demonstrated, counterintuitively, that this body can be at once fleshy and socially inscribed; that it can perform stereotypical femininity without offering guarantees of femininity in the flesh. In other words, they showed that the performing female body can be both publicly present and undermine the conventional rules of visibility, which have been critiqued for objectifying women.

Additionally, while their performances clarify the historical connections between humanist knowledge and text, on the one hand, and between materialist revisions of humanism and performance, on the other, their work also demonstrates that text and performance are not inherently humanist or



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materialist mediums, nor are they inherently gendered, but become so through their varying applications.

By engaging with these various binaries, Schneemann and the Guerrilla Girls not only added to the rich critical repertoire of their historical predecessors, but also anticipated, in the 1970s and 1980s, the critiques of the linguistic turn and of second-wave arguments about visibility that performance scholars such as Case and Phelan would develop in the 1990s. By beginning to articulate these arguments in performance, before they were expressed in scholarly texts, these artists demonstrated unequivocally the rich critical potential of the performance medium.

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37. On Clapp's philosophy, see Miller, p. 19–21.

38. Clarke, p. 15, 159.

39. Dominic Shellard, *British Theatre Since the War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 144; Gilliatt's reviews have been collected in Penelope Gilliatt, *Unholy Fools: Wits, Comics, Disturbers of the Peace: Film and Theatre* (New York: Viking Press, 1973).

40. Rachel Shteir, 'Notes on New York Theatre Criticism', *Theater* , XXXV, No. 3 (2005), p. 79, 84.

41. Jonathan Kalb, 'The Death (and Life) of American Theatre Criticism: Advice to the Young Critic', *Theater*, XXXIII, No. 1 (2002), p. 51, 55, 46.

42. Irving Wardle, *Theatre Criticism*, p. 9.

43. Wardle, p. 9–10.

44. Feminist journalist Harriet Martineau described theatre journalists as 'a small established corps of men undertaking to pronounce on works in regard to each one of which the reviewer is, probably, less competent than the author. . . . Failure to perceive this, made the great Review a receptacle of unjust judgments.' Quoted in Cima, '"To be Public as a Genius and Private as a Woman",' p. 42.

45. Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Ann Arbor; London: UMI Research Press, 1988), p. 120.

46. Michelene Wandor, *Carry on, Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 1986), p. 119.

47. Quoted in David Benedict, 'Notices', review of *The Madness of Esme and Shaz*, by Sarah Daniels, *Independent*, 2 March 1994, p. 27. Benedict is among the few male journalists who speak of a male prejudice towards the play.

48. Andrew St George, review of *The Madness of Esme and Shaz*, by Sarah Daniels, *Financial Times*, 23 February 1994, p. 19.

49. Quoted in David Benedict, 'Notices'.

50. Ibid.

51. See Elaine Aston, 'Daniels in the Lions Den: Sarah Daniels and the British Backlash', *Theatre Journal*, XLVII, No. 3 (1995), p. 393–403.

52. Claire Armitstead, 'Nostalgia for the Future: Can Women's Theatre Regain the High-Ground it Once Occupied?', *Guardian*, 22 February 1994, p. 6.

53. 'Theatre – the Media', Critics and the Arts, panel discussion, *Nieman Reports*, XLVI, No. 3 (1992), p. 21.

54. Carole Woddis, 'Feminism and the Theatre Critic', *Women: a Cultural Review*, V, No. 2 (1994), p. 195.

55. Betty Caplan, 'Shocking Men in the Stalls', *New Statesman and Society*, 29 April 1994, p. 34.

56. Betty Caplan, 'Speaking in Tongues', *New Statesman and Society*, 4 June 1993, p. 32.

57. Jonas and Bennett, p. 4, 6.

58. Jonathan Kalb, 'The Critic as Humanist', in Kalb, *Play by Play: Theater Essays and Reviews 1993–2002* (New York: Limelight Editions, 2003), p. 34–5.

59. Ibid., p. 36–7.

60. Ibid., p. 56.

61. See, for instance, Richard Walsh's discussion of Marsha Noman's *'Night, Mother* in his book *Radical Theatre in the Sixties and Seventies* (Keele: British Association for American Studies, 1993), p. 38; and Sam White's commentary on Margaret Edson's *Wit*, expressing his surprise that 'While [*Wit*] was about a woman, and a woman's problems, it was really about the human predicament', rather than the 'whining victim play' that he had expected it to be. Quoted in Jonas and Bennett, 'Report on the Status of Women'. In the discussions following the report, feminist journalist Linda Winer of *Newsday* and feminist critic Alisa Solomon, ibid., commented on this tendency.

62. 'The Institutional Theater', Critics and the Arts, panel discussion, p. 14.

63. Brustein, 'Himalaya Criticism', p. 73.

64. Robert Brustein, 'Culture by Coercion', *New York Times*, 29 November 1994, p. A25. Consider also his description of the American Repertory Theatre, where he served as artistic director at the time of his conflict with Wilson, as 'a wholly integrated company . . . devoted to plays of quality *regardless* (rather than *because*) of race, sex, or national origin' (italics in the original), in Robert Brustein, 'Letters: Exit the Critic', *New York Times*, 6 March 1994, p. SM8.

65. August Wilson, *The Ground on which I Stand* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2001), p. 29, 13.

66. Ibid., p. 26.

67. Ibid., p. 23–5.

68. Robert Brustein, 'Subsidized Separatism', *New Republic*, 19 August 1996, p. 40.

69. Ibid., p. 40–1.

70. Henry Louis Gates Jr., 'The Chitlin Circuit', in Harry J. Elam, Jr. and David Krasner, ed., *African American Performance and Theatre History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 137.



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71. See also Novid Parsi and Christopher Piatt, 'Color Bind', *Time Out Chicago*, 27 July–2 August 2006, p. 13–20.

72. Jackson, *Professing Performance*, p. 116.

73. Wardle, p. 96–7.

74. Cima, *Early American Women Critics*, p. 4, 8.

75. Carolee Schneemann, *More than Meat Joy*, ed. Bruce MacPherson (New Paltz, NY: Documentext, 1979), p. 234.

76. Chicago's installation consisted of three big tables forming together an equilateral triangle, with thirteen place settings on each side. The vagina-shaped plates were the most controversial aspect of the installation.

77. Amelia Jones, 'The "Sexual Politics" of *The Dinner Party*: a Critical Context', in Jones, *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History* (Los Angeles: UCLA at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, in association with the University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996), p. 87; Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 5.

78. Schneider discusses this reductive view of Schneemann's work and emphasizes its materialist aspects in Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 32–7. For a discussion of male critical responses to Schneemann's work, see Kathy O'Dell, 'Fluxus Femininus', *TDR*, XLI, No. 1 (Spring 1997), p. 43–60. For a detailed analysis of feminist and non-feminist responses to *The Dinner Party*, see Jones, 'The "Sexual Politics" of *The Dinner Party*'.

79. Sue-Ellen Case, *The Domain-Matrix: Performing Lesbian at the End of Print Culture* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 107.

80. Sagri Dhairyam, quoted in Case, p. 37.

81. Jones, 'The "Sexual Politics" of *The Dinner Party*', p. 85.

82. Schneemann, *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 159.

83. Schneider, p. 131–2. Schneider is responding to a particular critical essay by Elinor Fuch, 'Staging the Obscene Body', *TDR*, XXXIII, No. 1 (1989), p. 33–58. In the essay, Fuch quotes Schneemann's *Eye/Body* (1963) as representative of the essentialism of cultural feminism.

84. For instance, she makes statements such as 'the male need to differentiate is more extreme'. Schneemann, *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 193.

85. Schneemann, *More than Meat Joy*, p. 234.

86. Schneider, p. 29.

87. In art-historical literature, Klein and Schneemann are mostly connected in discussions of Fluxus, an international artistic movement of the 1960s and 1970s whose representatives worked across disciplines and artistic media. Klein is considered a precursor of Fluxus, and Schneemann one of its female representatives. See Thomas Schmit, 'A Fluxus Farewell to Perfection', interview with Günter Berghaus, *TDR*, XXXVIII, No. 1 (1994), p. 79; Kathy O'Dell, p. 43–60; and Ken Friedman, ed., *The Fluxus Reader* (Chichester: Academy Editions, 1998), p. 84, 85, 184, 196.

88. Jean-Michel Ribettes, 'Yves Klein and the War of the Jealous Gods', in Olivier Berggruen, Max Hollein, and Ingrid Pfeiffer, ed., *Yves Klein* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2004), p. 157.

89. Yves Klein, quoted in Hans Pässler, 'An Encounter with Yves Klein's Blue Universe', in *Yves Klein*, p. 126.

90. Nicole Root, 'Precious Bodily Fluids', *Yves Klein*, p. 142.

91. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the Politics of Performance* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 10. See also Gay Gibson Cima, 'Black and Unmarked: Phyllis Wheatley, Mercy Otis Warren, and the Limits of Strategic Anonymity', *Theatre Journal*, LII, No. 4 (Dec. 2000), p. 466–7.

92. See Henry Sayre, *The Object of Performance: the American Avant-Garde since 1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 86–7.

93. *Guerrilla Girls: Fighting Discrimination with Facts, Humor, and Fake Fir* <www.guerrillagirls.com> (accessed 25 January 2007); see also Anne Teresa Demo, 'The Guerrilla Girls' Comic Politics of Subversion', *Women's Studies in Communication*, XXIII, No. 2 (2000), p. 135.

94. Guerrilla Girls, *Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls* (New York: Harpers Perennial, 1995), p. 37.

95. <www.guerrillagirls.com/posters/index.shtml > (accessed 25 January 2007).

96. 'Guerrilla Girls on Tour', interview by Raphie Frank and Mindy Bond.

97. Guerrilla Girls, *Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls*, p. 22.

98. Joel Schechter, 'Jonathan Swift and the Guerrilla Girls', in Schechter, *Satiric Impersonations: from Aristophanes to the Guerrilla Girls* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), p. 21 <www.netlibrary.com/nlreader.dll?bookid=11591&filename=Page_21.html> (accessed 25 January 2007).

99. 'Guerrilla Girls on Tour', interview by Raphie Frank and Mindy Bond.

100. Cima, *Early American Women Critics*, p. 4–6.

101. Anne Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, trans. Frank Collins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 14.

102. In my own experience as a theatregoer, I have seen such analysis happen in the women's washrooms on multiple occasions. While waiting in line for a free washroom stall, I have heard women clarify plot points and discuss the significance of design elements with their friends. When I saw Suzan-Lori Parks's *Topdog/Underdog* in the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago in 2003, I also witnessed a woman address the line collectively: 'Well, ladies, what shall we make of the brothers' names Booth and Lincoln?'

103. August Strindberg, preface to *Miss Julie*, in Strindberg, *Miss Julie* (New York: Dover, 1992), p. xiv.

104. Schechter, p. 22.

105. Ibid., p. 32.

106. See Roundabout Theatre Company <www.roundabouttheatre.org>.

107. Melissa Silverstein, 'Women's Voices Missing from the Theatre: Does Anyone Care?', *Women's Media Center*, 7 February 2007 <www.womensmediacenter.com/ex/020707.html> (accessed 25 September 2008); and Jill Dolan, 'Women Playwrights Foiled Again, Still . . . What About "The Scene?",' *The Feminist Spectator*, 14 February 2007 <http://feministspectator.blogspot.com/2007_02_01_archive.html> (accessed 25 September 2008).

108. This alternative formulation was coined by Ben Cameron, former Executive Director of the Theatre Communications group, following his involvement in the NEA-sponsored Art Journalism Institute at the University of Southern California in 2005. See Ben Cameron, 'The Eye of the Critic', *American Theatre*, XXII, No. 6 (July–August 2005), p. 4. Cameron was a participant in the discussions organized by the Fund for Women Artists following Jonas and Bennett's report. See Jonas and Bennett.



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